

The Abiding Value *of the* Old Testament

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"The word unto the prophets spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken."

—Emerson.

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To
MARY—LEE

THE ABIDING VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

EVER since Marcion and the Gnostics emphasized the antithesis between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New, extreme views have prevailed among men as to whether the Old Testament is really an essential part of Christianity. Some are disposed to cut the New Testament aloof from the Hebrew Scriptures altogether, because, as they claim, Christianity can live on quite as well without them. Others regard the Old Testament as “the millstone about the neck of Christianity,” a stumbling-block to Christians as much as the Cross is to the Jews. While others, who are not so explicitly antagonistic in their atti-

THE HEBREW CUSTODIANS

tude, have no adequate appreciation of the preciousness of the treasure which has come down to them from remote antiquity. The same men, it should be noted, are usually lacking also in their appreciation of the New Testament. For, as Dr. George Adam Smith observes, "It is one of not the least faults of a merely academic criticism, that it never appeals to Christian standards except when it would disparage the men of the Old Covenant." (*Jerusalem*, II, 343.)

Our estimate of the worth of the Old Testament will depend largely upon our attitude to the Hebrews as the recipients and custodians of God's revelation to men. Their history is "like a piece of shot silk; hold it at one angle and you see dark purple, hold it at another and you see bright golden tints." Too often the Old Testament is studied with purely æsthetic motives. Frequently it is approached from the

CHRISTIAN ROOTS: HEBREW SOIL

strictly scientific point of view. But neither—nor both—of these methods is adequate to unlock its wealth. The Old Testament will not yield itself to mere æsthetic or scientific investigation. The Old Testament, above all other books, has spiritual and religious value as the record of God's revelation to the world. The roots of Christian teaching go deep down into Hebrew soil, and to understand the whole tree one must study the roots. The institutions of the Hebrews are types of Christian truth. Christianity, as well as the Bible, has its Old Testament half. The Old Testament is an integral part of the Word of God, a source of inspiration, and a guide to ethical life. The problem of our day is to rediscover its value and to portray it to men.

I

THE OLD TESTAMENT HAS INTRINSIC VALUE OF ITS OWN

THAT the Old Testament has *historical* value is obvious to every student of antiquity. It is the Ariadne's thread to the archæologist. (Cf. Genesis 10 and 14.) It is likewise the fountain head of what is known as "the philosophy of history." The Hebrews were the first to take a teleological view of the world, the first to interpret human events in terms of God's providence. Other histories displayed the disciplinary love of God, but it was left for the Hebrews to discern that love and to describe it in terms of God's love. To them it was not enough to study mere events, they sought the underlying principles and

LITERARY QUALITY

showed the nexus of cause and effect. Ottley, in eulogizing this quality in Hebrew historians, goes so far as to define their inspiration as "the ability to see God's hand in human events."

The *literary* excellence, too, of the Old Testament is widely recognized. The charm of its simplicity, the variety of its imagery, the grace of its diction, the melody of its rhythm, and the richness of its vocabulary and thought, are conspicuous features of the whole Old Testament—of its history, biography, oratory, prophecy and poetry alike. Even our own English vocabulary has been enriched by words taken over from the Hebrew, such as Messiah, Sabbath, manna, Nazirite, seraph, cherub, shekel, satan, shibboleth, and many others. Almost countless expressions and phrases of our everyday speech come directly from the Old Testament: for example, "See eye to eye," "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die," "Precept

RELIGIOUS ORIGINALITY

upon precept, line upon line," "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," "Without money and without price," "Peace like a river," "Everlasting life," etc., etc. As a monograph on *comparative religion*, also, the Old Testament is unique. Scant indeed would be the sources handed down from antiquity were the Old Testament of the Hebrews lost. This is true not alone because of its quality but also because of its character and genius. Above all the other religions of antiquity, that of the Hebrews is conspicuous for *originality*. The Hebrews seem to have had a special talent for truth that was theistic and for verities that were eternal. Through their fertility of conception, which bears the unmistakable marks of inspiration, they discovered some truths once for all, truths which have ever since been regarded as essential factors in all true religion. Primary among these is their conception of *God*. The Jewish doctrine

THE MAJOR PREMISE—GOD

of God is absolutely unique. To the Hebrew mind, Jehovah is not only a majestic sovereign, strong and terrible, but He is personal, holy, merciful, righteous and good: a Father, also, who pitieth His children, and who, though transcendent, condescends to hold communion and fellowship with the humblest of His saints. The Old Testament never attempts to prove the existence of God; it assumes this as axiomatic. It is "the fool" who says in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). "God first" is the Hebrew watchword; accordingly everything is traced up to Him as Sovereign, supreme and first. (Cf. MacGregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, 10f.) The frequent anthropomorphisms, or human appearances of God in the person of the Angel of the Covenant, instead of detracting from the Hebrew idea of God, rather emphasized the personality of God, and actually prepared for the incarnation—

A NATIONAL CONSCIENCE

the transient paving the way for the permanent.

The Hebrews also discovered *conscience*. In due time they even produced an order of men who became a conscience for the nation. Modern prophets too frequently shrink from being a conscience unto their people. In order to express Israel's moral sense of obligation to God, Moses formulated a comprehensive code of civil and religious law, which lifted them above the plane of their heathen contemporaries. Their neighbors were content to worship Nature; the Hebrews, on the contrary, early discovered that the law which declares the *will* of God is better than nature or "the heavens" which tell of His *glory*: "The heavens declare the glory of God but the law of Jehovah (in contrast) is perfect" (Ps. 19:1, 7). They also taught men to pray, giving expression to their desires through sacrifices, which was the antique

PRAYER, FAITH AND SERVICE

manner of obtaining the divine favor. Isaac, for example, entreated Jehovah for his wife, literally, "offered sweet smelling fragrance"; for the word in the original, *atar*, which is translated "entreated," is akin to that in our English expression "attar of roses" (Gen. 25:21). The Hebrews also cultivated *faith*, as the essential element in religion. And they emphasized duty, in particular the primary obligations of honesty, righteousness, obedience, and charity. They even enunciated for the first time what might be called the germ of "Christian Endeavor," as, for example, when Malachi commends the priests who "turned many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:6), or when the Hebrew sage declares that "he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25). The Hebrews were the first also of the nations to teach the sacred character of *patriotism*: for example, Zebulun and Naphtali are praised in the

GOD'S HIGH SCHOOL

Song of Deborah for having jeopardized their lives unto the death upon the high places of the field (Judg. 5:18). Immortality likewise (Pss. 16 and 17) and redemption (Isa. 63:8), forgiveness of sin (Ps. 32) and victory over death (Isa. 26:19, Dan. 12:2), are all carefully unfolded, with greater or lesser fullness, in the Old Testament—not so fully, however, as to preclude the necessity of the incarnation. It was left to Christ to bring life and immortality to light; He it was who filled with richer, deeper ethical content the rudimentary forms which the Hebrews were as yet unable to appreciate. For we must ever remember that while God sent the nations to common school and Israel to high school, so to speak, He sent the disciples to college at the feet of Christ. Thus He revealed Himself “by divers portions.”

Most remarkable also is the fact that in the Old Testament the great truths

CONCRETE EXAMPLES

of religion are presented not in abstract form but *concretely*, and indeed so attractively that the reader is charmed by their simplicity and beauty, and by the freshness of Hebrew life and faith. Take, for instance, some of the great characters of Old Testament history. In the story of Noah, what a parable is there of encouragement to those who are misunderstood, misinterpreted and scoffed at; in the career of Abraham, what an instructive illustration of the summons which must come to us all to go out into the great unknown country of the other life; in the ambitious, unscrupulous character of Jacob, what a likeness to the spiritual biography of many a man; in the story of Joseph, what a parable of the way to bear adversity; in that of Gideon, what a summons to faithful endeavor with assurance of victory; in Samson, what a lesson of the way in which the noblest opportunities of birth and power may

MASTERPIECES OF ART

be prostituted; in Samuel, what a splendid type both of a normal religious childhood and of a normal religious life; in Isaiah, what a stately example of one who recognized that public affairs demand the devoted service of the holiest and most consecrated men; in Jeremiah, what a model of personal, individual moral responsibility; while in Job, tried in the furnace of affliction, what imperishable evidence that the present life is all too short for the realization of a divine theodicy of perfect justice, and of the inevitability of a life beyond.

In comparison with such great masterpieces of religious art—such living, throbbing characters—how unimportant and insignificant are the alleged infelicities and blemishes in the Old Testament to which men sometimes superficially point the finger of disapproval: for example, polygamy, divorce, slavery, revenge, ritual, the vindictiveness of the

THE BEAM IN OUR OWN EYE

psalmists, and judgment; the extent and character of which have been so greatly exaggerated by the enemies of the Old Testament. Granted that polygamy was practiced by the patriarchs and others, and indeed was even provided for in the Deuteronomic law (21:15ff), Mormonism is a vastly fouler blot upon the page of our history in this twentieth Christian century than the polygamy practiced by the Hebrews is upon the Old Testament. Not one of the prophets was a polygamist. Granted, also, that divorce was allowed by Moses, we know on Christ's testimony that "from the beginning it was not so," but that Moses, because of the hardness of Israel's hearts suffered them to do so (Matt. 19:8). Today in Christian Chicago alone there are doubtless ten times as many divorces as there were among the ancient Hebrews. And granted that slavery was practiced among the Israelites of ancient times,

MITIGATIONS OF THE LAW

the slavery of their day was very materially mitigated by the regulation of the Year of Jubilee, which brought complete release to every chattel son of Jacob. Granted that the law of revenge stands as a recognized principle on the Hebrew statute books, so that men were legally permitted to exact "eye for eye and tooth for tooth," it should never be forgotten that this semi-barbarous statute, this *lex talionis* of the Hebrews, was an immense advance over the unrestricted vengeance of paganism, which exacted two eyes for one or as many as it was possible to take. Moreover, it should be remembered that the principle underlying this very law still forms the basis of the civil law of all Christian civilized nations throughout the world. And again, granted that ritual bulks large in the early laws of the Pentateuch, the prophets of Israel differentiated sharply, as Jesus later did, between the essential

THE GOSPEL IN THE PROPHETS

and non-essential in religion, and thus enunciated the principle of progress and development which enabled Judaism to meet successfully every new emergency. Isaiah asks, "What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats" (Isa. 1:11). And Micah, his younger contemporary, still more explicitly asserts, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). Granted, I say, that the psalmists sometimes appear vindictive, and utter imprecations upon their enemies (Pss. 109 and 136), even Paul, the apostle, facing the headsman's block, did not forget the offence of Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. 4:14). And,

JUDGMENT

once more, granted that the Old Testament frequently tells of judgment, and paints solemn pictures of universal doom upon those who disobey the commands of Jehovah-God, the New Testament is far more explicit in the emphasis it places on eternal doom. It is indeed Jesus Himself who describes the doom of hell as a place of outer darkness and of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25). It was His loving lips that shaped this form of words, so heart-touching in its wailing but so decisive in its proclamation of blackness, homelessness and sorrow. In the words of the late Dr. Alexander Maclaren, that "prince of preachers" and king of expositors, "the religion of Jesus Christ was no mere soft and pliant sympathetic helpfulness; it could smite and stab and be severe, and knit its brow, and speak stern words, as all true service must. For it is not service but cruelty to sympathize with the sinner and say

LOVE ALSO IS STERN

nothing in condemnation of his sin.” (*Expositions of Holy Scripture*; on Matt. 20:28, p. 76.) There are, of necessity, two sides to moral religion, one stern, the other tender. The law, it is true, speaks in stern imperatives; but the gospel is as rigid in its requirements as the law; in fact, its demands and penalties are in several instances even more severe than those of the law.

II

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE INTER- PRETER OF THE NEW

WE frequently hear men say that the New Testament is the key to the Old, but it is equally true that the Old Testament is the interpreter of the New. The New Testament is conceived in the womb of Hebrew thought. Pedagogically as well as apologetically the Old Testament is an indispensable part of Christianity. "No scripture is of private interpretation."

Few men adequately appreciate what the Old Testament has meant to Christianity. The Old Testament canon has had a history in the Christian church as well as in the Jewish. It has wrought itself into the very warp and

woof of Christianity. This was possible because the essence of the Old Testament is love. Even the Decalogue is introduced by a preface which implicitly states that it was because Jehovah loved Israel that He gave them a code of laws: "I am Jehovah thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," therefore, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:2, 3). Men are wont to say that the Old Testament reveals a God of justice, whereas the New Testament, a God of love. Such a statement is much narrower than the facts. The God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New, and His name is love: to this the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and especially the prophecies of Hosea bear witness. The Old Testament, indeed, describes God as dwelling in a temple, the New Testament as tabernacling in the heart. Ancient temples had no windows, Deity dwelt

THE OLD TESTAMENT NATIONAL

in thick darkness (1 Kings 8:12); in the New Testament also God dwells in mystery, but it is the mystery of light. According to the Old Testament, God breathed into man the breath of life (Gen. 2:7); according to Paul, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The Old Testament gives prominence to the solidarity of the nation; the New Testament to the value of the individual. The messages of the prophets are emphatically social, those of Christ individual and evangelistic. The popular national note of the Old Testament has been repeatedly echoed and re-echoed throughout the history of the Christian Church. "The Apostolic church worked officially upon the democratic precedents set her throughout the law and history of the Old Covenant." (G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, I, 455.) Martial psalms, like the 68th, have been sung on the plains of the Palatinate, from the lips

HOLINESS THE IDEAL

of Cromwell's Ironsides, and in Scotland's struggle for crown and covenant.

The *ideals* of the two Covenants are practically the same: that of the Old Testament is holiness, "Ye shall be holy; for I, Jehovah, your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2); that of Jesus, perfection, "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). There is doubtless a slight difference in the ethical contents of these conceptions, but in essence they are the same—likeness to God. The reason for the difference is patent to any one who will pause to reflect: the Old Testament covers millenniums of ethical and religious development, the New Testament less than a century.

As Dr. George Adam Smith observes: "The Old Testament lies not under but behind the New. It is not the quarry of the excavator or archaeologist. It is the Hinterland of the

THE NEW LATENT IN THE OLD

New; part of the same continent of truth, without whose ampler areas and wider watersheds the rivers, which grew to their fulness in the new dispensation, could never have gained one tenth of their volume or their influence." Or, as Augustine has suggested:

"The New is in the Old *contained*,
The Old is in the New *retained*;
The New is in the Old *concealed*,
The Old is in the New *revealed*;
The New is in the Old *enfolded*,
The Old is in the New *unfolded*."

Or, as Prof. Sanday puts it, "The New Testament is latent in the Old, the Old Testament is patent in the New." Accordingly, in our study of the Old Testament, we should never lose sight of its goal in the New; and in our study of the new Testament, we should never lose sight of its origin in the Old. The actual necessity of studying the New Testament in the light of the Old becomes more obvious when we recall

THE OLD QUOTED IN THE NEW

that there are not fewer than five hundred direct *quotations* from the Old Testament in the New. New Testament saints found it possible to adopt Old Testament utterances as their own. Religious fervor speaks the same language. Not only the "Benedictus" of Zacharias (Luke 1 : 68-79), which is so steeped in Old Testament language that some one has called it "an anthology from the Psalms and Prophets," but the Beatitudes also, the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer, the Hosannas of the multitude on the occasion of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and even the Master's gracious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," are full of Old Testament reminiscences and richly colored with Old Testament thought and phraseology. Likewise some of the most precious phrases in the New Testament, such as "the living God," "the great Shepherd

MESSIANIC HOPES

of the sheep," and "the blood of the everlasting covenant," are but echoes of the language of the Old Testament. And what is incidentally very remarkable, the most frequently quoted psalm of the collection, after the 23d, is a psalm of imprecation, the 69th. But no doctrine or teaching of Judaism is taken over into Christianity without, of course, being transfigured in the process.

But still more binding of the two covenants in one are the *Messianic hopes* of the Old Testament, which have found their fulfilment in the New, and which prepared the Hebrew mind for the coming of the Christ. Without exception the Hebrew prophets were optimists. To one and all of them Israel's golden age lay in the future, not, as with so many other nations, in the past. Many of them predicted definitely the advent of One who would bring spiritual salvation to Israel. Jer-

INTERPRETERS OF CHRIST

emiah even predicted that a new Covenant would some day supersede the Old (Jer. 31 : 31-34). Obviously, therefore, the Old Testament is the interpreter of the New, and will continue to be so long as Jesus Christ is regarded as the fulfilment of Messianic hope. And accordingly, "it is necessary," as Professor Sanday observes, "to go back to the old Hebraic foundations of our religion and lay them again more deeply and firmly, or rather see how they have been laid by the Great Architect, who is so much wiser and mightier than we."

III

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

AT the outset we must distinguish sharply between Paul's attitude to *the* Law and his attitude to law in general, or what might be called the legalistic spirit. In Gal. 5: 18 he declares, "If ye are led by the Spirit ye are not under the law," by which he means not the Mosaic law in a technical sense, but law in general, or the spirit of legalism, as opposed to the spirit of love. To Paul the law meant a spirit of service, or a *quid pro quo*; the gospel, a spirit of sonship; and these were incompatible. Duty, to Paul, under the gospel was no longer a foreign constraint but an inner native impulse. His attitude to the law as a discipline was that of an

THE MORAL LAW PERMANENT

orthodox Jew, but his attitude to the spirit of legalism as a condition of salvation was antinomian. The law was "our tutor to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The law was something "added" (Gal. 3:19). Promise preceded law. In order to be justified the sinner must go behind the law. Paul, therefore, appeals from law to promise—from Moses to Abraham (Gal. 3:16). The law which failed to justify was not the moral but ritual law; for example, circumcision. The moral law was permanent and possessed perennial value because it pointed to sin and sharpened conscience. "When the commandments came," Paul says, "sin sprang into life and I died" (Rom. 7:9). The moral law, like the gospel, lifts the sinner above legal conditions and the enticing indulgences of the flesh and realizes its ideal in mutual service; in short, love is the fulfilment of the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10).

TIMOTHY'S EDUCATION

Paul was not only a friend of the law and thoroughly conversant with the law himself, he presupposed a remarkable acquaintance with the Old Testament among the members of his churches. Timothy especially he commends because "from a babe" he had known the sacred writings "which are able to make one wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." And the same sacred writings he most cordially recommended to his readers when he said: "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

The Epistle to the Hebrews is even more minute in its comparison of the Old and New Covenants. Yet in it also God's revelation is declared to be continuous. Its very first sentence an-

THE LAW COULD NOT ATONE

nounces that God had been speaking to men from the beginning : “God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son” (Hebs. 1:1, 2). Still to the unknown author of this epistle, as to Paul, the law could not atone for sin. Repeated sacrifices are of no avail, because in spite of them the conscience remains uncleansed. The most elaborate sacerdotal apparatus effected nothing beyond ceremonial purification, because mere animal sacrifices could not remove sin (Hebs. 10:4). The law even tends to blur things, for by its vast machinery and ritual, the original plan of God is obscured. Only Christ can forgive sin. Judaism at best is but an afterthought. In comparison with Christianity it has not even the merit of priority which seems to belong to it. It is something second-hand. Christianity is the origi-

THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

nal religion of heaven, which "has cast its shadow," as Peake expresses it, "into this world in the form of Judaism" (Hebs. 8:2). The offering of Christ carries us back into the region of eternity. Jesus, the Son of God, was Creator, in that He furnished the plan with His sacrifice of Himself as the central fact of man's redemption. Accordingly, He entered, as High Priest, into the heavenly sanctuary—the true locus of realities—and there by offering once for all His own blood, became the Author of eternal redemption. Chronologically, Christianity succeeded Judaism, but in reality Christ is the Lamb which was slain before the foundation of the world.

This in brief is the position of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But we must not suppose that he regarded the New Covenant as something quite apart from the Old, or as making in itself a fresh start. On the

THE SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

contrary, the New Covenant was the spiritual background of the Mosaic Covenant. Chronologically, to us, the spiritual was subsequent to the sensuous, but in the plan of God the spiritual preceded the sensuous. The ritual thus became the husk, so to speak, to preserve the true faith—to protect the ethical core from injury ; *it* was temporary, the kernel existed from all eternity. Both were from God.

But the final test of the abiding value of the Old Testament must be the revelation of Jesus Christ. Whatever accords with the teaching of Jesus Christ will be abiding. We come then to the question, What was the attitude of Christ to the Old Testament ?

IV

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

OF one thing we may be certain ; The Old Testament was Christ's Bible, and He was well conversant with it. On more than one occasion in His disputes with the Pharisees, He showed intimate acquaintance with the Old Testament, and drew heavily upon it (Matt. 21:16). Like the Jewish Rabbis of His time, He emphasized the divinity of the law and found spiritual life in it (John 5:39). He accepted absolutely every precept of the Old Testament. Even the *lex talionis* of Exodus 21:24, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," He left standing as a basis, so to speak, of His own higher mandate, which Matthew Ar-

“I CAME TO FULFIL”

nold has very appropriately called “the secret of Jesus,” passivity under trial (Matt. 5:38-41). Jesus abrogated nothing. As some one has well said, “No one save Jesus had the right to lay the law aside, and He made it immortal.”

He explicitly stated, “I came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil”; adding that “not one jot or tittle” should pass away from the law till all things be accomplished (Matt. 5:17, 18). Jesus, too, spoke as a law-giver: “But I say unto you.” However, when He proclaimed the Golden Rule, “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them,” He very carefully added, “for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). In terms of this Rule, Jesus would obviously have us interpret all Old Testament commands. He, Himself, invariably upheld the validity of the written

law. What He attacked was the Rabbinic interpretations placed upon it by human commentators and unscrupulous casuists. Rules destroy principles. Through the mechanical rules of exegesis the Rabbis missed the spirit of the Old Testament. It is as unjust to accuse the Old Testament of being responsible for the Pharisaic restrictions of Christ's times, as to charge Christianity with the corruptions of the Roman Church at the time of the Reformation.

Jesus nowhere gives the shadow of a hint that any statement of the Old Testament is inaccurate or needed revision or correction. On the contrary, He set His imprimatur on the Old Testament in its entirety. Jesus, like His people, is also distinguished for His originality, but His originality consists not so much in the new truths which He enunciated, as in the discoveries of new meaning which He placed on the law and

ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS

prophecy. Jesus penetrated deep down below the isolated precepts of the Old Testament and unified as well as transformed them. The Old Testament was not simply the foundation of His teaching, not merely the historical prerequisite of His claims, but a constituent element of His message, the background of His thought, even part and parcel of His conception of religion.

When He was asked, for example, which was the greatest commandment, He cited Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18, not merely as individual precepts but as indicating the spirit that gives value to all obedience; and He emphatically affirmed that upon these two commandments—love to God and love to men—hang suspended the whole law and the prophets. Thus Jesus soared away far above the petty disputes of the schools about the relative worth of isolated precepts, teaching that the sum of man's duty and the germ of all good-

THE REALIZED IDEAL

ness spring from supreme and unlimited love to God. In this way He shifted the center of men's thoughts from conduct to character, from deeds to affections. The Old Testament sages had said, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Jesus said, as a man loves so is he. Duties are unified in love.

Christ, moreover, actually fulfilled the law and the prophets. He not only recognized Himself as the predicted Messiah, He also realized in Himself the ideal of the prophets. "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them [the two disciples on the way to Emmaus] in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24: 27). The seers of old had dreamed of an empire which should rule provinces; Jesus established a kingdom which controls passion and exalts love. His contemporaries indeed were disappointed in Him because He did not establish

LAW INCARNATE

a temporal kingdom. Nevertheless He realized the spiritual ideals of their illustrious ancestors just as the flower fulfils the purpose of the bud. "The bud passes away as the flower comes, but it is not destroyed, because it has fulfilled its destiny." (Barton, *The Roots of Christian Teaching as Found in the Old Testament*, 269.) In this sense Jesus became the incarnation of the law as well as the incarnation of love.

V

OUR ATTITUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHRIST'S attitude to the Old Testament must determine ours. He is God, He is Truth. Following Christ's example, some of the greatest thinkers the race has ever produced, as Gladstone, have recognized that in the Old Testament we have inherited from the Jewish Church a very precious legacy. Bishop Westcott, one of the very greatest New Testament scholars of modern times, freely acknowledges that the Old Testament is an essential part of the Christian's Bible. The fact that it teaches the simplest elements of religion, and begins with the utmost rudiments of truth, such as are contained in Genesis,

THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID

does not destroy its abiding value. We do not discard the alphabet when we begin to read. We do not remove the base of a pyramid in order to study its apex.

Through the Old Testament the ancient world still speaks most eloquently. Human nature is a constant quantity. The types described in the Old Testament are typical and practical. Consequently we dare assert that the Old Testament is destined, because of its inherent merit, to continue a fresh fountain of living truth, which will ever help to invigorate and restore, to purify and refine, to ennoble and enrich the moral and spiritual well-being of mankind.

Who can possibly estimate the moral influence of the Old Testament upon the race ! So long as sin exists in the world there will continue to be need of the Ten Commandments. So long as greed and selfishness are found among

IMMORTAL POEMS

men there will be the necessity of Law. Law is not annulled by love ; rather love carries on its work in a law-governed sphere. Even the hygienic laws of Leviticus are not yet obsolete, neither will they be obsolete so long as statisticians tell us that the average age of Gentile life is 27 years while that of Jewish is 37. So long as men are tried and tested, the book of Job will be imperishable ; so long as old age overtakes the sons of men, the book of Ecclesiastes will furnish timely instruction to boys and girls to remember also their Creator in the days of their youth ; so long as the race knows sorrow and sighing the Shepherd Psalm will remain immortal ; “for though it came from an Oriental heart and is expressed in terms of Oriental experience, it deals with the deep things of life with a simplicity so noble that it touches the heart of every generation.” (McFadyen, *The City with Foundations*, 201.)

FROM THE JEWISH HYMN-BOOK

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil.

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

As one has reverently said, “To live up to the highest expressions of the old Jewish hymn-book is to be a pure Christian.”

REALITY IN WORSHIP

The chief enemy of the Old Testament is ignorance of it. For more than two millenniums the Old Testament has circulated among men, as Dr. Barton expresses it, "revealing the heart of man to himself, holding before human eyes the law of God, awakening the conscience, unfolding the story of the Father's forgiveness in Christ, and forming by its lofty teaching the characters of the saints." And it is destined, I firmly believe, to live on so long as true religion holds sway over human hearts ; for, though we may put more knowledge into our worship than did the ancient Hebrews, we shall hardly be able to put in more reality.

The one supreme immortal element in the Old Testament is *faith in the only true and living God*. The one outstanding portrait which it paints is that of the one ineffable Face, before which stands the soul in joyful converse and immortal faith. The Old Testament

A ROLL-CALL OF HEROES

postulates FAITH as the great central fact of religion :

Faith that believes in an original, personal Creator,

Faith that worships (like Abel),

Faith that abstracts us from the world and enables us to walk in communion and fellowship with God (as Enoch did),

Faith that inspires us to save others (like Noah),

Faith that drives us on foreign missions (like Abram),

Faith that makes the impossible, possible (as in the case of Sarah),

Faith that reconciles God's commands (as Abraham's did when he was bidden to offer in sacrifice Isaac, the son of covenant promise),

Faith that chooses between temporary suffering with God's people and the temporary enjoyment of sin (as Moses did),

Faith that places religion above patriotism (as Rahab did),

Faith that suffers reproach, imprisonment and even martyrdom.

In short, the faith that makes heroes,

THE WORKS OF FAITH

gives substance to things hoped for and reality to things as yet not seen ; which was illustrated in the many Old Testament worthies, who “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens” (Hebs. 11:33, 34). Such faith in concrete form we find inimitably depicted in countless Old Testament characters. Surely the faith of such men will live on and on forever ; and not only their biographies, but their writings will continue to be recognized by the Christian Church as indeed “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.” So that with Emerson, we may well affirm —

“The word unto the prophets spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken.”

THE SOIL OF CHRISTIANITY

In conclusion, therefore, the Old Testament must be regarded as an essential part of the Word of God. It has intrinsic value of its own ; it is the interpreter of the New Testament ; Paul recognized its eternal validity ; Jesus Christ magnified it and made it honorable ; and every thorough Bible student recognizes its intrinsic worth.

To the Christian it has perennial value, because it supplies the soil out of which Christianity has sprung. Such an one will consequently read it carefully and ponder it ; he will likewise assimilate it, live it and obey it ; for unless he obey it, it will not yield itself to him. There is an esoteric element in the Old Testament ; spiritual things are spiritually discerned. He will read it devotionally as well as study it critically. Even the New Testament specialist must be conversant with it. In fact he cannot understand the New Testament without it.

THE TEST OF LIFE

Moreover, in order to appreciate the full message of the Old Testament, it must be studied in the closet, and its promises tested in the actual intercourse of daily life. The greatest care must be taken to catch its spiritual significance. Such an exercise demands time, but the rewards are worthy of the effort. Of no other book is the motto of the old Schoolman more appropriate: "We should prepare a man for the world by taking him out of the world for a while, to be influenced, not by the spirit of the age, but by the spirit of the ages." The spirit of the ages is the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the Old Testament is none other than the spirit of the Gospel. Truth is continuous. "Divine revelation is all of one piece."

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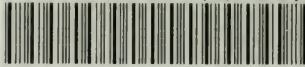
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